DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 046 PS 017 568

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TITLE The Identification of Resources for the Expression of Social Gender Identities.
PUB DATE Aug 88
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Australian Developmental Conference (5th, Sydney, Australia, August 26-28, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Environment; Cultural Influences; Educational Anthropology; *Elementary School Students; Ethnography; Foreign Countries; Grade 1; *Grouping (Instructional Purposes); *Instructional Materials; Longitudinal Studies; *Outcomes of Education; Primary Education; *Sex Differences; Social Development; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *England; Social Marking

ABSTRACT

Reported are findings from the first phase of a longitudinal study concerning the impact of the first year of school on the development of young children's social gender identities. Ethnographic research in two primary schools in the south of England identified six aspects of settings which can be used to mark gender: social categories, group composition, space, material culture, activities, and behavioral styles. Of the six, grouping, space, and materials are discussed. Longitudinal observations were made in three first-year classes of the schools. Observations conducted over a period of weeks in the second half of the first school term resulted in the recording of target children's activities. At least 10 and no more than 20 observations were recorded for each child. Findings identified the resources for the expression of social gender identities that are available to children as they enter school. The resources marked as masculine and feminine can be mobilized by children who are entering school. (RH)

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ED299046

The Identification of Resources for the Expression of Social Gender Identities

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The Identification of Resources for the Expression of Social Gender Identities

This paper reports one aspect of a wider study of the impact of the first year of school on the development of social gender identities. Of course, children bring into school the representations of gender which they have already developed. However, the representations of gender which develop prior to the child's entry into school are embedded in the context of the personal relations of family life, and the principle hypothesis of our study is that schooling plays a major role not only in amplifying the representations of gender which children bring into school, but, more significantly, in legitimising gender as a general social category. To use Habermas's (1984) distinction, the representations of gender which children bring to school are embedded in the field of communicative action, and schooling is an important arena in which gender is reconstructed as a category in the field of strategic action.

Our earlier studies have shown that by the age of 4 years children, both boys and girls, are able to recognise and produce such gender marked linguistic features as nouns and pronouns, as well as being able to sort pictures of people consistently for gender. By this age children are also able to sort, with limited success, collections of gender marked

toys (cf Lloyd and Duveen, in press). These results illustrate the extent to which these young children's cognitive and linguistic activities are already organised in terms of the social representations of gender of their community, and there is a striking similarity between boys and girls in this respect, both have begun to internalise social representations of gender. Yet when these children were observed playing with a peer, equally striking differences emerged between boys and girls in their use of gender marked toys. Boys showed a strong preference for masculine marked toys and avoided using feminine marked toys, while girls made no such distinction, choosing masculine and feminine marked toys with almost equal frequency. Thus there are differences in the social gender identities expressed by boys and girls through their use of toys, differences which draw on the resources provided by social representations of gender.

In more general terms, as we have argued before (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986), social identities enable individuals to locate themselves in relation to social representations, and it is social representations which provide the resources for the expression of social identities in thoughts and actions. Where it is possible for individuals to adopt different positions in respect of a social representation, as in the case of gender, these differences will be articulated as distinct social identities.

Extending this conceptual scheme to our current research, we expect to be able to trace the development of social gender identities through the first year of schooling. To do this

we need to be able to describe both the social representations of gender in the classroom as well as the particular ways in which distinct social gender identities are articulated. Our research strategy has been to undertake an ethnographic study of gender in two primary school classrooms as a means for describing the social representations of gender in these schools. Through this study we have identified six aspects of settings which can be used to mark gender (Duveen and Lloyd, in press). These are

[1] **Social Categories**: The invoking of social categories in the organisation of interaction.

[2] **Group composition**: Interpersonal settings can be described in terms of the combinations of the social category memberships of the participants.

[3] **Space**: Different areas of the classroom can be marked in such a way that space can be used as a sign denoting gender.

[4] **Material Culture**: The various objects available in the classroom may also be marked for gender.

[5] **Activities**: Organised activities such as scripted play or rituals can also signify gender.

[6] **Behavioural Styles**: Behavioural styles are given gender meanings, and their use serves to mark gender.

Following on from our ethnographic study, we have embarked upon a longitudinal study of children through their first year of school. The instruments for this study are quantitative observations and individual interviews, and

their construction has drawn on our ethnographic work. This paper describes some of the results of our observations from the first part of this longitudinal study, in particular those which deal with three of the aspects identified in our ethnographic work: group composition, space and material culture. These observations were made in the first term of the children's first year at school; and the aim of the analyses which follow is to identify the resources available to children as they enter school for the expression of social gender identities. This will provide the baseline for comparisons with a second set of observations being made in the final term of the children's first year.

Settings

The observations were made in the first year classes of two schools in the south of England. Although they are both in the same town, the schools have different characteristcs. The first is located in a predominantly working class area and is quite small, with only one class in each year. The second is in a more middle class area and is larger, with three classes in each year. Children enter school at the beginning of the year in which they will be five, though they are only able to attend full time from the beginning of the term in which they will be five. This policy has an effect on the composition of the classes we have studied. In the first school the reception class [Class 1] includes children who are full time from the beginning of the year, as well as some who attend for the morning session only until the second or third term. In the second school the

reception year has three classes which are divided by age. The class we have observed contains the youngest children, all of whom were part time in their first term. The school had divided the class into two groups, those who attended in the morning [Class 2] and those who attended in the afternoon [Class 3], although both groups had the same teacher and the same classroom.

Observation Method and Subjects

Children in each class were observed one at a time in a pre-determined order. Once a particular target child had been identified details were recorded of their location in the classroom, the other persons with whom they shared an interpersonal context and their activity in relation to each of these other people (a sample observation sheet is shown at the end of the paper). A range of activities were recorded, and these are explained in detail in the following sections which report the data. As soon as the record for one child had been completed the next child on the list became the target child and the process repeated. Observations were made over a period of some weeks in the second half of the first school term, and each observation records the target child's activity at a particular moment in time. Up to 20 observations were recorded for each child. Some children had fewer than 20 observations due to absences, and, in Class 1, because they joined the class late in the term, or only attended part-time. All of the

analyses which follow are based on a sample of children for whom at least 10 observations were recorded. This criterion included all the children in Classes 2 and 3, and excluded 7 girls and 6 boys from Class 1. The numbers and mean ages of the children at the beginning of the school year are shown in Table 1.

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TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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Group Composition

The first aspect to be considered is that of group composition as a medium through which social gender identities can be expressed. The question here concerns the pattern of associations between children in the daily life of the classroom; are boys and girls observed in different types of groups? Where teachers -or other adults- directly organise children's activities they influence the composition of groups of children, so that group composition needs to be considered in two conditions, where children interact with the teacher or participate in some activity organised by the teacher, and where they are not.

Each observation of a target child recorded any other children present in the same context as the target child. Five types of groups were defined which describe the different possible combinations of children:

[1] **Alone** -where no other children were present with the target child.

[2] **Single gender groups** -groups which were exclusively either female or male.

[3] **Mixed gender groups** -but with even numbers of boys and girls.

[4] **Mixed gender groups** -with **more girls** than boys.

[5] **Mixed gender groups** -with **more boys** then girls.

In addition each observation also recorded whether or not the target child was engaged in a teacher organised activity, so that it was possible to sum the number of observations of each target child in each type of group in both conditions of teacher organisation.

	Not Teacher Organised	Teacher Organised
Alone		
Single		
Mixed Even		
More Girls		
More Boys		

The frequency counts in each of these cells were divided by the total number of observations made on each target child, and these corrected measures were analysed in a repeated measures design with gender of target child and class as between subjects factors. Separate analyses were undertaken for each type of group to compare the frequencies with which boys and girls were observed when they were not teacher organised and when they were (see Table 2).

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TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

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These results can be summarised as follows:

[1] Children are more often Alone when they are not teacher organised (mean=0.065) than when they are teacher organised (mean=0.037).

[2] Boys were more frequently observed in single gender groups than girls (mean for boys=0.261; mean for girls=0.185); and single gender groups were most frequent in Class 2 and least frequent in Class 1 (mean for Class 2=0.283; mean for Class 3=0.223; mean for Class 1=0.192).

In addition, children were more often in single gender groups when not teacher organised (mean=0.367) than when they were teacher organised (mean=0.096), although as the significant interactions show this difference varied both between boys and girls and between the classes. The graph of the three-way interaction (see Figure 1)

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FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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illustrates that the differences between boys and girls are greater when children are not teacher organised, and that the magnitude of these differences varies between classes.

[3] The analysis for Mixed Even groups showed that these were more common among girls (mean=0.078) than boys (0.049), and this was also the case in the analysis of mixed groups with more girls (mean for girls=0.095; mean for boys=0.026).

[4] Mixed groups with more boys were more commonly observed among boys (mean=0.124) than among girls (0.076). In the analysis for this group there was also a main effect for class, with class 2 (mean=0.038) having lower scores than class 1 (mean=0.149) and class 3 (mean=0.123).

The effect of teacher organisation on the gender composition of groups is twofold; teachers facilitate the combination of children into groups, and they also facilitate the formation of groups of mixed gender. When children are able to control their own participation in groups they are more frequently alone, and they more frequently combine into single gender groups. No effects for teacher organisation were found for the various types of mixed groups.

A second analysis was undertaken to compare the participation of children in the different types of group when they were not teacher organised. Again repeated measures for the five types of group were analysed in a design with gender and class as between subjects variables.

The only significant main effect in this analysis was for type of group ($F=98.09$; $df=4,160$; $p<0.001$), but there were also interactions between gender and group ($F=12.09$; $df=4,160$; $p<0.001$) and class and group ($F=8.14$; $df=8, 160$; $p<0.001$). The graph in Figure 2

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FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

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shows the interaction between group and gender. It can be seen that Single gender groups were the most frequent for both boys and girls, although the rate at which boys combine into single gender groups is higher than that for girls. But the graph also shows that whereas girls participate at more or less the same level in all types of mixed group, boys are more frequently observed in groups with more boys and less frequently observed in groups with more girls.

Participation in the different groups also varies with class; while the rates in classes 1 and 3 are very similar, in class 2 there are more observations of Single gender groups and fewer observations of groups with more boys. The differences between classes are more difficult to interpret, since they represent not only differences between the styles of different teachers or the cultures of different schools, but also the relative numbers of boys and girls in each class. Classes 2 and 3 have the same teacher, yet in this analysis it is class 2 which is distinct from classes 1 and 3. In Class 2 there are almost equal numbers of boys and girls (8 boys and 7 girls), whereas in Class 3 there are nearly twice as many boys (9) as there are girls (5). When the whole of Class 1 is considered, including the children excluded from this analysis, there are 13 girls and 17 boys. Thus it is the class where there are equal numbers of boys

and girls which has the highest rate of single gender groups and the lowest rate of groups with more boys.

Space and Material Culture

Following the discussion of group composition it is now possible to consider the analyses of the use of space and material culture in the classroom. Each observation recorded both the location of the target child and whatever material they were engaged with. These observations were categorised as follows:

[a] Space

The classrooms were divided into a series of well bounded spaces.

[1] **Open Spaces** -these were the open areas used for a variety of activities such as building with large bricks, riding tricycles or large wooden trucks, as well as other mobile games.

[2] **Carpet** -the carpet has a special significance in an English infants school as the place where children assemble to listen to the teacher, to hear stories etc. At other times of the day it provides a setting for games which require space but are not particularly mobile, such as construction games of one kind or another, games with model cars, or play with dolls.

[3] **Home Corner** -Sometimes described as the wendy house, this area includes model cookers and cupboards with tea sets and saucepans, comfortable chairs, etc.

[4] **Table** -As well as providing a place for doing academic work, tables are also used for doing craft work, drawing, puzzles, playdough, etc.

[6] Other Spaces

[b] Material Culture

The great variety of materials in the classroom were combined in the following categories:

[1] **Dolls** -A variety of dolls, prams, teddy-bears etc

[2] **Construction Toys** -As well as Lego these included a number of other construction games.

[3] **Trucks** -Model cars, lorries and train sets.

[4] **Trikes** -Tricycles and large wooden lorries.

[5] **Open Space Toys** -The slide, rocker and rocking horse.

[6] **Large Bricks** -A variety of large wooden blocks for building.

[7] **Expressive Toys** -These included drawing, chalk and blackboard.

[8] **Physical Materials** -Sand, water, balance and playdough.

The main influence on the use of both space and material culture was that of the teacher, when children were observed in teacher organised activities they were almost wholly restricted to the table and the carpet, which are the locations used by the teacher for individual and group instruction. Similarly, when they organised children's activity, teachers also directed children to a very restricted range of materials. The analyses of these aspects, therefore, concerns only observations when children were not organised by the teacher.

For each target child observations in each zone and for each material were summed within each type of group, and this total divided by the number of times that the child had been observed in the corresponding group. Thus for each child a set of scores were obtained for their use of each zone and each material in each type of group. Again scores for each of these items were analysed as repeated measures in a design with gender and class as between subjects variables.

Before looking at the results of these analyses I should say a word about the use of both gender and group as variables. Although these characteristics can be considered separately, they are, of course, interdependent. The composition of groups is defined through the genders of the children who participate in them; at the same time children can choose to participate in different kinds of groups as a way of expressing their social gender identity. In the analyses which follow the category of single gender groups includes

both groups of boys and groups of girls, and these groups are only separated in group by gender interaction terms.

Masculine and Feminine Resources

Separate analyses were undertaken for each zone and each material, and an overview of the results from these analyses provides a summary of the resources which children employ in expressing social gender identities in these aspects of their interactions with their peers.

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TABLE 3.1 AND TABLE 4.a

ABOUT HERE

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The only items for which there are main effects for gender but no effects for either group or the interaction of group and gender, are the table as a space used by girls, and dolls used by girls and construction toys used by boys.

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TABLE 3.2 AND TABLE 4.b

ABOUT HERE

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The carpet is the only zone for which there is an interaction between group and gender. This space is used by single groups of boys, by boys alone, and by boys and girls in groups of more boys. Interactions between group and gender for materials all refer to single gender groups, groups of boys use the trikes, large bricks and trucks, and groups of girls use the physical materials.

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TABLE 3.3 AND TABLE 4.c

ABOUT HERE

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There are main effects for group in the analyses of open spaces (used by single gender groups, mixed even groups and groups with more boys) and other spaces (used by children when alone), and for open space toys (used by single gender groups and mixed even groups) and expressive toys (used by single gender groups).

Thus, while children's own gender exercises some influence on their use of space and choice of material, this effect is realised through the gender composition of the groups in which they participate.

In the analyses of zones it is noticeable that groups of more girls are the only type of group which does not mark out any particular space. It appears to be boys, in the

various types of groups, who are most active in marking out space.

In the analyses for materials, however, it is single gender groups which exercise the strongest influence. In the first place it is in single gender groups that there is most activity; all of the materials for which there is a main effect for groups show the highest mean scores occur in single gender groups. Secondly, it is in single gender groups that the clearest discriminations appear between boys and girls in their use of materials. All of the Gender by Group interaction terms arise through the differential usage of materials by groups of boys and groups of girls; in the various types of mixed groups boys and girls are not so restricted in their choice of materials. This result echos the results of our earlier studies of pre-school children's play with toys, where again it was in same gender pairs rather than mixed gender pairs that discriminations in use of toys was strongest (cf. Lloyd and Duveen, in press).

Single gender groups appear to be the predominant form of social organisation amongst peers in the classroom. The analysis of group composition showed that single gender groups were the most common type when children were able to to control their own association with their peers, and it is also in single gender groups that the most prototypical choices of materials were made by each gender. Associating in single gender groups provides children with a major resource for the expression of their social gender identity.

However, we are also aware from our ethnographic work that there are differences between single gender groups of boys

and of girls in their patterns of activity, differences which affect the formation and duration of other types of groups.

For the most part groups composed of more girls or more boys consist of groups of girls with a single boy and groups of boys with a single girl, that is of individual children entering single groups of the other gender. How are such entries negotiated?

A common form of activity for the boys, for instance, is that of parallel play, where several boys are grouped together in the same space, playing with the same material - such as the trucks- but not coordinated into a unified game. A girl can join such a group simply by picking up another truck and sitting down to become another parallel player.

The activity of groups of girls is often more interactive in style, being sustained by conversation and coordinated games (a pattern which has also been noted by Maccoby and jacklin, 1987). Entry into such groups for boys requires more explicit negotiation than for girls to join boys in parallel play. Often this means that boys participate in groups of more girls in only brief conversations, with the consequence that groups of more girls are less commonly observed than groups of more boys and may also have a more transient character. It is noticeable, for instance, that in the quantitative analyses of zones and materials groups of more girls are nearly always characterised by having the lowest mean scores of any of the groups.

These comments drawn from our ethnographic observations of the classrooms serve to illustrate the kinds of processes we shall be looking for in the analyses of the quantitative observations relating to the other aspects of social interaction we have identified, activity and behavioural style.

As we noted earlier, the data presented here come from the first phase of a longitudinal study. These analyses suggest that there are resources marked as masculine and feminine which children are already able to mobilise as they enter school. Questions about how the structure and content of these resources change during the first year of school will have to await the analysis of the data we are currently collecting.

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Table 1: Numbers and Mean Ages (in months) of Children

	Class 1		Class 2		Class 3	
	N	Mean Age	N	Mean Age	N	Mean Age
Girls	6	57.7	7	50.4	5	49.2
Boys	11	58.0	8	50.0	9	49.3

Table 2: ANOVA Teacher Organisation by Gender by Class for Each Type of Group

Effect (df)	Alone	Single	Mixed Even	More Girls	More Boys
Gender (1,40)		23.28 c	6.20 a	46.43 c	5.02 a
Class (2,40)		11.14 c			13.37 c
Gender by Class (2,40)					
Teach (1,40)	8.40 b	138.45 c			
Teach by Gender (1,40)		8.59 b			
Teach by Class (2,40)		9.20 b			
Teach by Gender by Class (2,40)		4.22 b			

[a=p<.05; b=p<.01; c=p<.001]

Table 3.1: ANOVA of Group By Gender By Class for Zones and Materials

Effect (df)	Table	Dolls	Construction Toys
Gender (1,40)	8.21 b	5.54 a	9.50 b
Class (2,40)			
Gender By Class (2,40)			
Group (4,160)			
Group By Gender (4,160)			
Group by Class (8,160)			
Group By Gender By Class (8,160)		2.34 a	

[a=p<.05; b=p<.01; c=p<.001]

Table 3.2: ANOVA of Group By Gender By Class for Zones and Materials

Effect (df)	Carpet	Trikes	Large Bricks	Trucks	Physical Materials
Gender (1,40)			8.37 b	5.72 a	4.87 a
Class (2,40)		8.26 b	3.81 a		
Gender By Class (2,40)				3.92 a	
Group (4,160)	2.57 a	9.92 c	11.05 c		11.89 c
Group By Gender (4,160)	4.60 b	6.59 c	6.75 c	3.16 a	2.53 a
Group by Class (8,160)		3.65 b	3.03 b		
Group By Gender By Class (8,160)					2.26 a

[a=p<.05; b=p<.01; c=p<.001]

Table 3.3: ANOVA of Group By Gender By Class for Zones and Materials

Effect (df)	Other Spaces	Open Spaces	Open Space Toys	Expressive Toys
Gender (1,40)				
Class (2,40)				
Gender By Class (2,40)				
Group (4,160)	3.45 a	6.04 c	2.63 a	4.64 b
Group By Gender (4, 160)				
Group by Class (8,160)				
Group By Gender By Class (8,160)		2.11 a		

[a=p<.05; b=p<.01; c=p<.001]

Table 4: Summary of Results for the Analyses of Space and Materials

[a] Main effect for Gender Only

	Female	Male
Zones		
Table	+	-
Materials		
Dolls	+	-
Construction Toys	-	+

Table 4: Summary of Results for the Analyses of Space and Materials

[b] Interactions between Group and Gender

	Alone		Single		Mixed Even		More Girls		More Boys	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Zones										
Carpet	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+
Materials										
Trikes	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Large Bricks	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trucks	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Physical Materials	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Summary of Results for the Analyses of Space and Materials

[c] Main effects for Group only

	Alone	Single	Mixed Even	More Girls	More Boys
Zones					
Open Spaces	-	+	+	-	+
Other Spaces	+	-	-	-	-
Materials					
Open Space Toys	-	+	+	-	-
Expressive Toys	-	+	-	-	-

Figure 1: Teacher Organisation By Gender By Class interaction in Single Groups

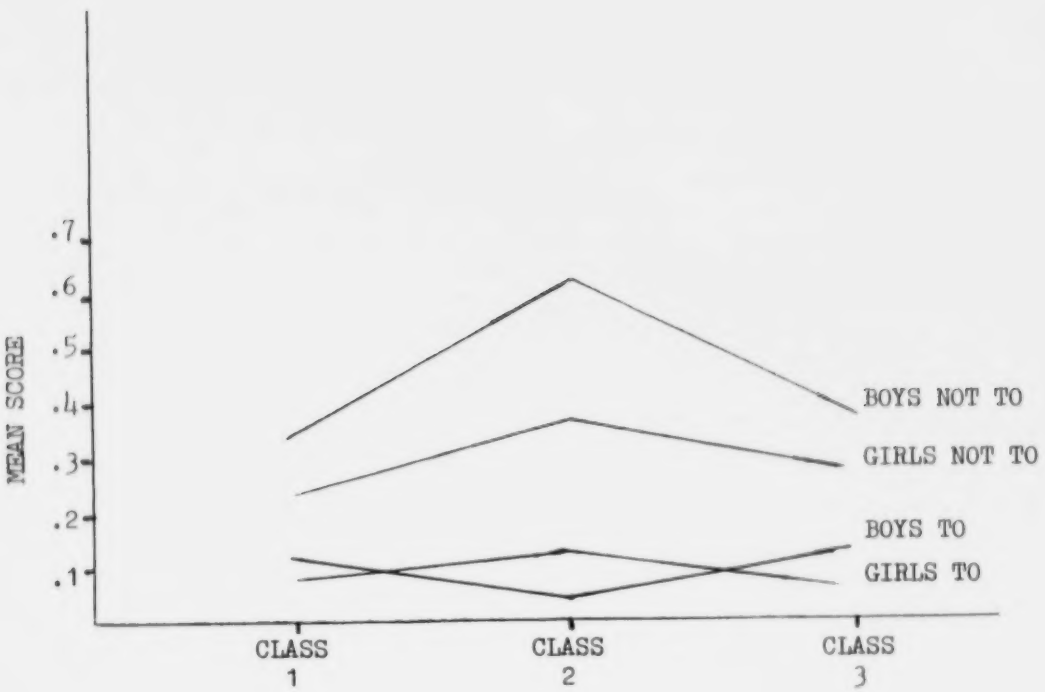
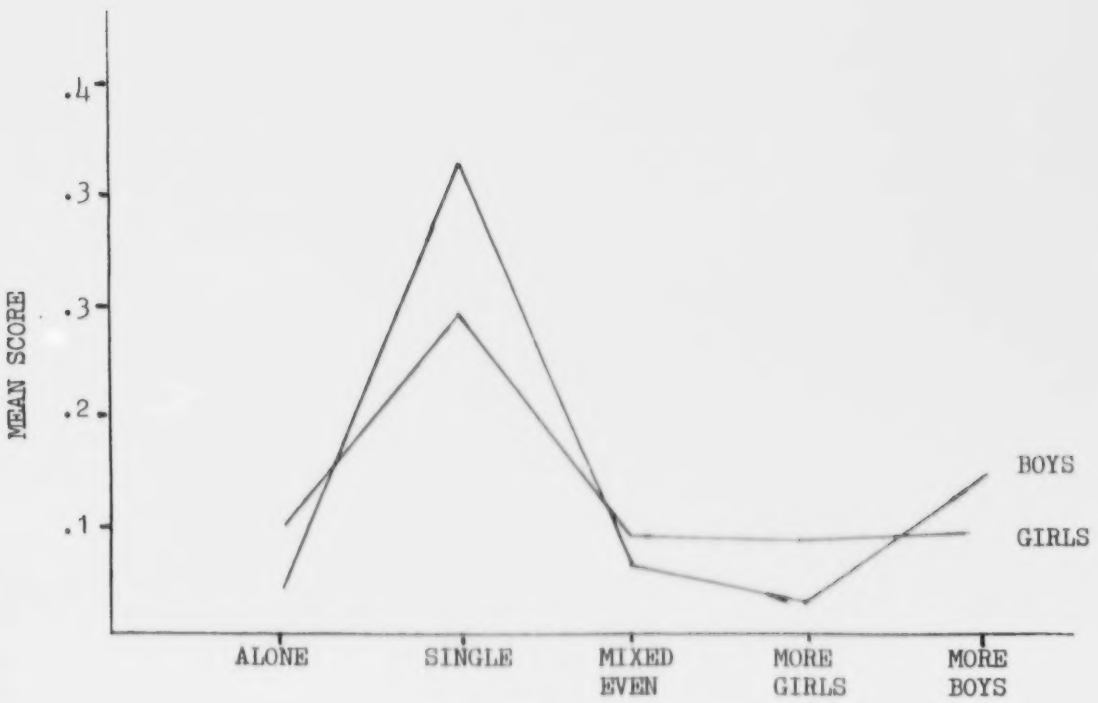


Figure 2: Group By Gender interaction when Not Teacher Organised



SCHOOL: DATE:

OBSERVER: TIME:

TARGET CHILD	LOCATION	ADULTS/ PEERS	SPEAKING	BEING SPOKEN TO	CONVERSATION	NON VERBAL	LISTEN: CONVER	LISTEN: MONOL/ADULTS	OBSERVING	ACTIVITY	GROUP	DISTANT	PRETEND	TEACHER/ADULT ORGANISED	MATERIALS		NOTES
															TARGET CHILD	OTHER	